

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 001504

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV, DRL
COMMERCE FOR ITA JEAN KELLY
USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/23/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA PRISONER RELEASES: BEFORE YOU GET TOO
EXCITED...

REF: A. RANGOON 1499 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. RANGOON 1488

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) The GOB's announcement on November 18th that nearly 4,000 prisoners -- mostly common criminals as it turns out -- would be released (ref A) is not symbolic of an improving attitude toward the democratic opposition. There have been no releases since November 19th, and of those released (only 1,000 thus far of the 4,000 promised) fewer than 30 were political prisoners. In addition, NLD offices outside Rangoon remain shuttered and there has been no mention by authorities that they plan to release detained NLD leaders Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo nor one of the NLD's founders U Win Tin (who was rumored, incorrectly, to have been freed on the 19th).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Moving beyond maintaining the status quo for the NLD, however, the GOB continues to harass NLD members around the country arresting and prosecuting them on trumped up charges. As mentioned in ref B, on November 5-6 police in Irrawaddy Division (south of Rangoon) arrested three local NLD members for violations of the Press and Publication Act, which prohibits publication and distribution of any material without prior approval by the GOB's censor board. The NLD members, U Han Sein, U Than Htut, and U Win Maung, were traveling back to their hometowns carrying a regular shipment of NLD official proclamations for distribution among local party members. The NLD's national and divisional leadership and lawyers have complained that the law allows distribution of official documentation from legal political parties. Thus far this argument has carried no water, and on November 19th the Township court arbitrarily delayed a hearing for the three until the 29th stating that this case must be heard before the Divisional court. According to NLD lawyers this is a very irregular decision.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: There are rumors that the initial release of nearly 30 political prisoners is a precursor to a general amnesty, though we've not seen any evidence that this is so. However, even as some number of political prisoners are released, the GOB continues its revolving door policy of matching publicly trumpeted releases with quiet new arrests. End comment.

MARTINEZ